

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS IN NASARAWA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

In Nigeria the first attempt on universal education was made by Western region in 1955, followed by the East in 1957 and the Federal Government in 1976. These attempts did not achieve all their objectives, the 1977 and the current 2004 National Policy on Education stressed and still stresses the need for Universal Basic Education for all Nigerians. This was launched on 30th September 1999. Bearing in mind the failure of the UPE scheme, people are skeptical about the effectiveness and the efficiency of what this new scheme will provide. They are afraid if this UBE would not go the same way of the UPE scheme. This paper therefore intends to look at the effort so far made at implementing the scheme. The problems that have been the lot of UBE where discuss as well as suggestions on the future directions that the scheme should pursue in order to reap the benefit of UBE as an important tool of sustainable national development.

Introduction

Education over the years is viewed as that which provides answers to the numerous problems of humanity in this fast changing world. Ejiogu (1991) sees education as an instrument par excellence for effective national development and a dynamic instrument of change. In recognition of the importance of education, Nigeria has continued to make serious effort towards providing its citizens with qualitative education for economic and political development.

Various governments in Nigeria have realized the importance of education. At various times, they have tried to universalize education each to varying degree of success. There was the 1955 free education in the western region, the

1957 free education in the Eastern region. The 1976 UPE was the first attempted to nationalize the universality of education. But it failed due to the problem of poor implementation. However, the dream seemed not to have died.

This UBE scheme has the desired legal backing, as the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, chapter ii, section 18, sub-section(1) says that, government shall also and when practicable provide free, compulsory and universal primary education, free secondary, university and adult literacy education programmes. The launching of UBE scheme is a strive to eradicate illiteracy amongst a great majority of its people. Nigerians have therefore, welcomed the federal government's policy to introduce the universal Basic Education programme and sees it as a reasonable approach to address the underlying causes of under development.

Though several attempts have been made on Universal Education without total success, Nigeria did not relent in its efforts. Rather, each failure helped to strengthen more the efforts of Governments towards providing relevant education for her citizens. The fundamental question is; can this scheme avoid the reoccurrence of past problems encountered by UPE?

Planning

Planning is one of the first things one does before embarking on any project. The planner considers the necessary options available to him, the means required and possible consequences.

The interesting thing about planning is that it is futuristic. It is an insight into the future. Edem, (2003) defined planning as a process of

studying the future and arranging the plan of action. The introduction of UBE in 1999 requires planning with respect to the number of pupils to be catered for, number of teachers and classrooms and so forth.

Koontz, Donnel and Wehrich in Obi, (2003), identify planning with control, because unplanned actions cannot be controlled since control involves keeping activities in check by correcting deviations from plans. Planning aims at preparing a set of decision for action in future which is geared towards goal achievement.

Blaug (1970) in Obi (2003) sees planning as involving making conscious decisions that have future consequences for action that will be taken in future. Three main features are easily identified in planning.

1. Every plan must be future orientated.
2. Every plan deals with predetermined objectives.
3. Every plan must be a process.

Management

Management is a process which enables organizations to achieve their objectives by planning, organizing, controlling their resources including gaining commitment of their employees. It connotes getting things done through other people's effort (Olagboye, 2004).

The Origin of Universal Basic Education

The issue of planning education has always been the concern of the whole world and not the developing countries alone. So many international conferences have been held in order to plan education by most countries of the world. Notable among such conferences which had influenced the planning of education in Nigeria is the Conference of Africa States on Development of Education in Africa, held in Addis Ababa in 1961 (Olagboye 2004). There were also;

- The international conference on Education held in Geneva (1962) under the auspices of UNESCO.
- The Lagos Conference of Ministers of African Member States held in 1976.
- The UNESCO Conference of Ministers of Education in African Member States held in Harare 1982.

In more recent times Nigeria participated actively in the world conference on Education For All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (Olagboye 2004). After the conference, member states including Nigeria adopted several measures to ensure that the objectives of basic education for all are realized. Consequently, President Olusegun Obasanjo launched the UBE in 1999. This was done to actualize the many international education conferences to which Nigeria is a signatory. These include:

- The Delhi Declaration on E-9 countries in 1991.
- The 6th Conference of African Ministers of Education, Dakar 1991.
- The 7th Conference of African Ministers of Education, Durban 1998.
- The OAU Decade of Education in Africa 1996-2006.
- The Dakar World Forum on Education For All 2000.

Source: Gidado in Tonwe, 2005.

Universal Basic Education and its Underlying Objective

The Universal Basic Education programme was launched on the 30th September 1999 in Sokoto by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The National Policy on Education (2004) states that basic Education this time around shall cover a period of 9-years duration, comprising 6-years of primary education and 3-years of junior secondary Education.

To seriously pursue this programme, the following goals and objectives were formulated to guide the establishment of the programme in

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the right track. The goals of the UBE scheme are to universalize access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time. The objectives of the scheme according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000) are as follows;

1. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
2. Provide free, compulsory UBE for every Nigerian child of school-going age.
3. Reduce drastically drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency.
4. Cater for drop-outs and out of school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
5. Ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for life long learning.

Management structure of UBE Scheme

The management structure of the UBE programme is a model in cooperative and consultative federalism, involving all the three tiers of government and even extending to the community level “Education For All, is the responsibility of all”.

The Federal Government

The responsibilities of Federal Government in UBE programme are as follows;

- The Federal Government initiated and launched the programme.
- It provides minimum standards and guidelines for its operation.
- It provides general oversight and monitoring the scheme.

- It mobilizes domestic and international support for the programme.
- Initiates and intervene in critical area of need for the success of UBE like payment of salary arrears of primary school teachers, construction and furnishing of additional class room block in schools.
- It provides support for core national institutions for implementing key aspects of programmes such as: National Teachers Institution (NTI) for Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP); Nigeria Educational Research and Development Centre (NERDC) FOR curriculum development, National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).For capacity building and educational administrator and planners, the National Institute for Nigeria Languages (NINLAN) for training and retraining of teachers in Nigeria Language.

At the State Level

The state Governments are responsible for the following;

- Formulate policies for Universal Basic Education in their respective states.
- See to the day-to-day running of the programme in their states.
- Recruit, discipline and promote teachers on grade level 07 and above.
- Pay the salary of Junior Secondary School Teachers.
- Establish and maintain State Primary Education Boards and other state level UBE agencies.

At the Local Government Level

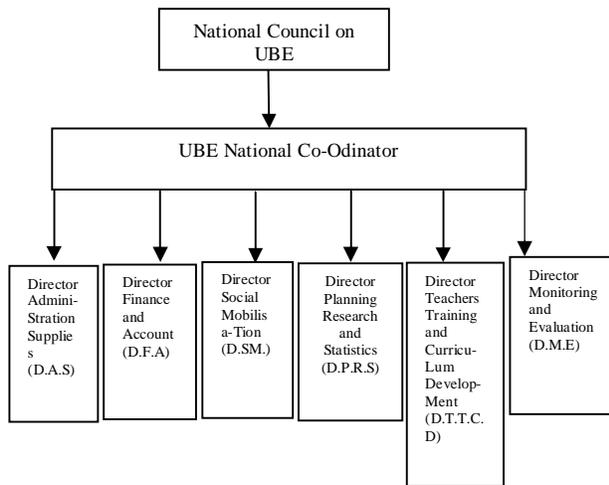
The various governments are to:

- Establish and maintain Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in their respective areas.

- See to day-to-day operations of the programme in their local areas.
- Recruit, discipline and promote teachers and other primary school level staff in their areas.
- Pay the salary of primary school teachers in their areas.

Management Structure of the UBE Programme

The management team headed by the UBE National Coordinator manages the programme. The programme has six departmental structures as shown blow;



In addition to the six departments, there area also 12 UBE zonal offices to ensure proper and effective monitoring of the UBE programme in the states and Local Government Areas. The zonal offices are located in Ibadan, Ado-Ekiti, Benin, Uyo, Owerri, Enugu, Makurdi, Ilorin, Yola, Kano and Sokoto. Each of the zones monitors the implementation of the UBE programme in two or three contiguous states. The zonal offices are headed by UBE zonal coordinator.

Lessons from the Past

The usual problem with Nigeria, however, has been with implementation of laudable programmes of this sort. For in many case the UBE is not entirely new in our educational vocabulary. Section1, sub-section 9(e) of the National Policy on Education (NPE) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) states; Universal Basic Education, in a variety of forms, depending on the needs and possibilities, shall be provided for all citizens; We need also to cast our minds back to the launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme of 1976. We are all aware that rather than universalizing primary education, that programme succeeded only in universalizing illiteracy, irregular attendance in schools and so forth, at least as far as public sector of education is concerned.

As we now seem to embark on a serious path of effecting UBE in the country, it is expedient to note that the UPE failed largely as a result of inadequate planning. In the then Western region for instance, Nwankwo et al (1989) noted that UPE encountered numerous problems which include that of shortage of trained manpower. This led to quick recruitment of untrained teachers. Also as a result of inadequate planning, resulting from unreliable data, the initial estimates of school age population were about 15% too low. Even more serious was the fact that the early projections failed to take into account the people's response to- "publicity".

Similarly, as a result of underestimation of cost, and general inadequate planning, the scheme in the then Eastern region faced the same problems of implementation. In fact, one year after launching the scheme as "free". The region was forced to re-introduce fees.

However, it is heart warming and reassuring to note that the initiators and operators of the new UBE seem to be aware of the need to learn from the inadequacies of the past.

The Universal Basic Education and Sustainable Development

The scheme is a right step in the right direction for sustainable development. Economics believe that any investment in education has effect on the economy and on the society. With the laudable objectives of the scheme the UBE will provide the right type of skilled labour required for national development.

The content of the UBE is believed to lead learners to acquisition of managerial skills, communication skills and functional literacy and numeracy. According to Inyang-Abia (1997) the possession of some relevant forms of knowledge, values, attitudes and skill are necessary guides to sustainability and development. This therefore suggests that UBE is an important instrument of change that will bring about national development.

The only way to achieve sustainable development is through investing in education. There is no country that will achieve social and economic transformation without a significant rise in the level of literacy of its people.

Therefore, for sustainable development in the country, there is an urgent need for Universal Basic Education implementation, failure of which may hinder political, social and economic growth of our nation.

Problems Affecting Successful Implementation of UBE Scheme in Nasarawa State

1. Inadequate learning materials and infrastructure. Infrastructures include class rooms. Furniture, equipment and other facilities. These are still inadequate in our public schools, thus, resulting in inadequate accommodation for pupils. In some schools pupils sit on the floor to learn. Tables, chairs and books were supposed to be given to all pupils but this is not the case in the area.
2. Irregular payment of teachers allowances. The teacher is the most crucial determinant factor in the success or failure of the scheme. The inability of the government to pay teachers their allowances promptly affects their level of commitment in teaching. And therefore these laudable objectives of the scheme to eradicate illiteracy will be a mirage. The 'UBE teachers' as they are called have not been paid for the past three months in the state.
3. Problem of monitoring and evaluation; Olagboye, (2004) believes that supervision is aimed at improving and sustaining the quality of teaching as well as motivating teachers towards performing their work optimally. The effectiveness and efficiency of UBE depends to a large extent on well devoted supervisors. Unfortunately there are inadequate supervisors for the scheme in Akwanga L.G.A.
4. Lack of implementation of the compulsory attendance of pupils at school; in Nasarawa State, a large number of school-going age are not in school. Most of them are still seen roaming about the streets involving in one economic activity or the other probably to support or supplement their family income. Despite this no law enforcement agent has arrested parents of such children as stipulated in the UBE Act.
5. Conflict of Management: There is an existing conflict of management in Nasarawa State between the state ministry of Education and the State universal basic Education board (SUBEB). As a result SUBEB has not been able to take full control in the planning, management, funding, and co-ordination of the junior secondary

component of the UBE programme. This issue has generated animosity between Ministry of Education and SUBEB, which has given room to divergent information and advice to state government, thus, affecting the full implementation of the scheme.

Conclusion

A country that is not able to develop the skills and knowledge of its citizens and to use them effectively in the national economy will not be able to develop anything. Sustainable development can only be achieved through education which begins at the basic level. When people are developed through the UBE scheme they will develop all the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable development.

Recommendation

- For the Local Government to enforce compulsory attendance at school, enforcement agents (officers) should be employed to compel all parents and guardians to send their children to school. If this is done the present practice of children hawking during school hours will be reduced to barest minimum.
- Appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategies should be put in place to ensure strict compliance with approved UBE plan. The UBE can properly be coordinated through regular monitoring and evaluation of the objectives and report all deviations from standard to the appropriate bodies.
- The government should as a matter of priority ensure that UBE teachers are paid regularly and promptly. They should be given special allowances other than what is originally due unto them.
- Nigeria government should learn from those other Africa countries that are successful in their educational policies. Perhaps we should

borrow a leaf from Uganda where success stories of the UBE were being told.

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